Opium

Terminal Learning Objective

Upon completion of this training, the student will become more aware of what opium is and its relationship to Afghanistan farmers and the International Community.

Black Tar Opium, approximately 3 grams
Image by Anonymous, © 2001 Erowid.org

Enabling Learning Objective

1. Definition of opium.
2. Review historical facts about opium.
3. List some of the negative ways opium affects the body and the brain.
4. State several reasons why the opium trade is important to the people of Afghanistan.
5. Recognize the ways in which the sale of opium affects the whole International Community and what is being done to reduce its effect.

WHAT IS OPIUM?

Botanical name: papaver somniferum.

Street names: Smack, china white, horse, black tar, Mexican mud .

The Sumerians called it Hul Gil, the 'flower of joy.'

The flower is grown mainly by impoverished farmers on acres called hectares in remote regions of the world and is one of the most important medicinal plants.

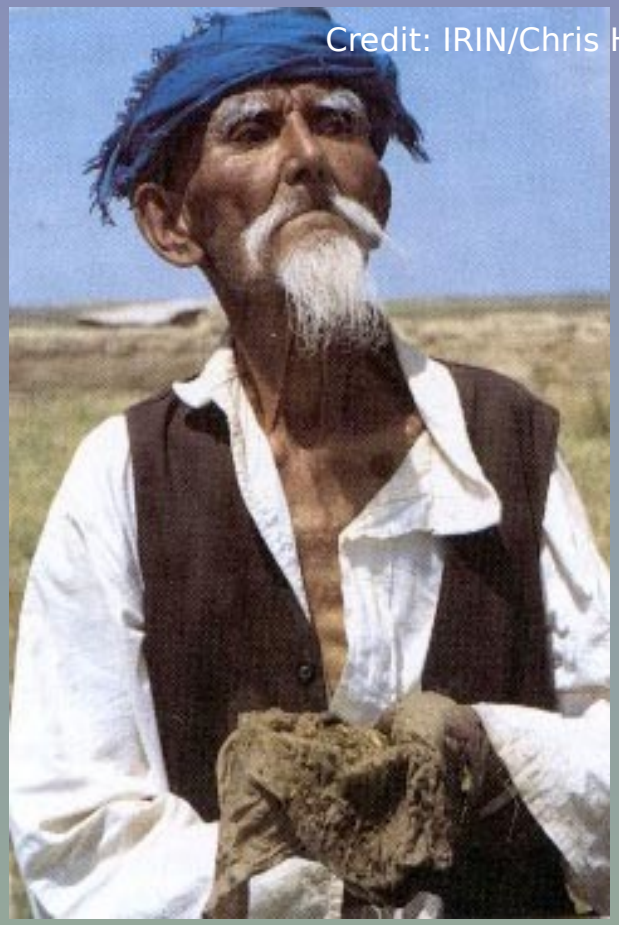
It flourishes in dry, warm climates.

FARMERS OF OPIUM

Most opium poppies are grown in Southeast and Southwest Asia, a.k.a. The Golden Triangle and the Golden Crescent.

The farmers live in very primitive conditions and use opium as a means to support themselves.

Opium is also used locally as a substitute for modern medicines.


Credit: IRIN/Chris Horwood

Golden Triangle and the Golden Crescent

PREPARING THE LAND

To prepare the land, the farmers slash-and-burn the fields for opium poppy planting.

They then scatter handfuls of poppy seed over the field.

Opium poppies take about three months to mature.

OPIUM FLOWERS

After three months, brightly-colored flowers bloom at the tips of the greenish, tubular stems of the poppy plant.

In about seven days, the flower petals usually fall off.

The remaining stems and pods can sometimes be used for floral arrangements.

RAW OPIUM

The raw opium is harvested as a gum collected from each capsule.

The outside layer of the capsule is scored, and the opium gum slowly leaks out.

The gum is then scraped off with a flat tool called a scraper.

RAW OPIUM

When all the gum is collected, it is set out to dry for several days.

When it is dry, it is wrapped in a banana leaf or plastic.

The opium gum is then stored and traded.

PRODUCTION OF OPIUM

After the harvesting, the capsules are cut from the stem and allowed to dry.

The capsules are broken open and the seeds inside are used for next year's crop.

REFINING RAW OPIUM: MORPHINE

Raw opium is put through a chemical mixture until it is reduced to a brown paste.

The brown paste is pressed into “bricks” for easy transport.

Morphine base is a smokable substance in a pipe or ready for further processing into heroin.

http://www.poppiesinternational.com/opium_poppy/opium_poppy.html

REFINING MORPHINE: HEROIN

The conversion of morphine bricks into heroin commonly results in two types of heroin:

No. 4 heroin (injectable heroin)

No. 3 heroin (smokable heroin).

The final product is a fluffy, white powder known in the trade as number four heroin.

Effects of Heroin

Most people who abuse these drugs die in their third decade of life.

Effect of Heroin on the Body

Opium is addictive and can have toxicological effects.

Heroin is the most fast-acting of all the opiates.

When injected, it reaches the brain in 15-30 seconds; smoked heroin reaches the brain in around 7 seconds.

The peak experience via this route lasts at most a few minutes.

"***It's so good. Don't even try it once.***"
intravenous heroin user

Effect of Heroin on the Body

There is a euphoric effect and a reported ability to:

- reduce anxiety
- increase self esteem
- help cope with daily problems.

Effect of Heroin on the Body

Repeat users will inject between 2-4 times daily. Higher doses usually cause sleepiness.

At higher doses still, the user will nod off into a semi-conscious state (“on the nod”).

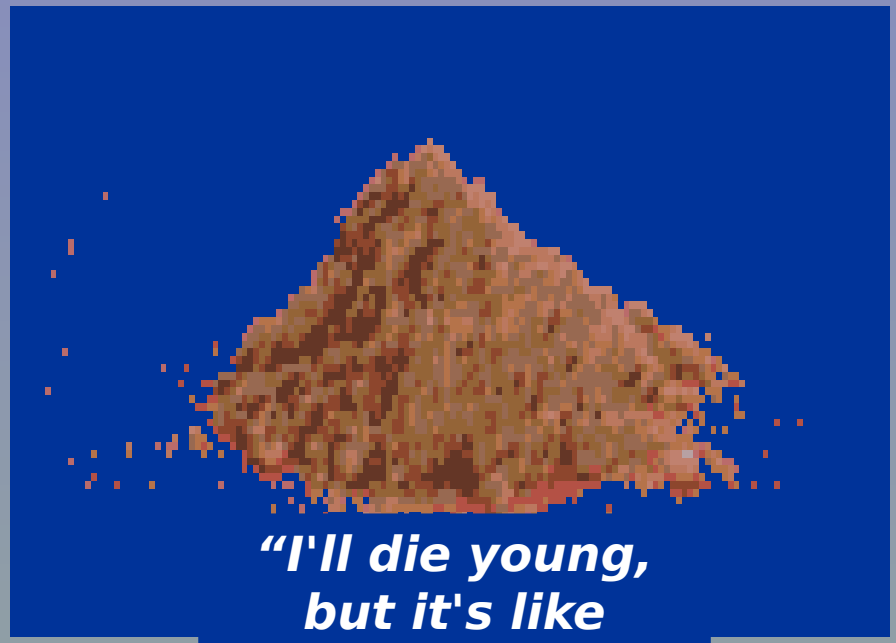
The effects usually wear off in 3-6 hours, depending on the dose.

Effect of Heroin on the Body

Addiction can start immediately after the effects of the heroin wears off.

Physical dependence can occur after 2-10 days of continuous use.

Heroin withdrawal symptoms usually peak within 36-72 hours and may last for 7-14 days.



“I'll die young, but it's like kissing God"
Lenny Bruce

Effect of Heroin on the Brain

The active ingredient in opiates - morphine - has a chemical structure similar to a chemical found in the brain .

The chemicals are naturally manufactured in the brain when the body experiences pain or stress. They make us feel good as well as ease the pain.

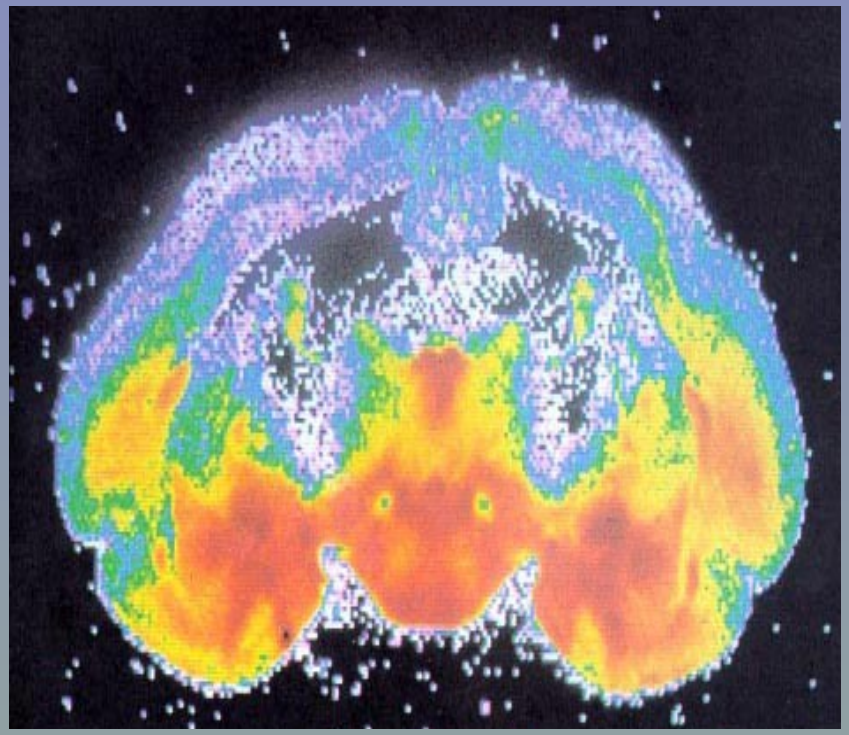


IMAGE OF GUINEA-PIG BRAIN
The red areas represent the highest density of opioid receptors; yellow areas represent moderate density; while blue, purple and white represent low density.

Effect of Heroin on the Brain

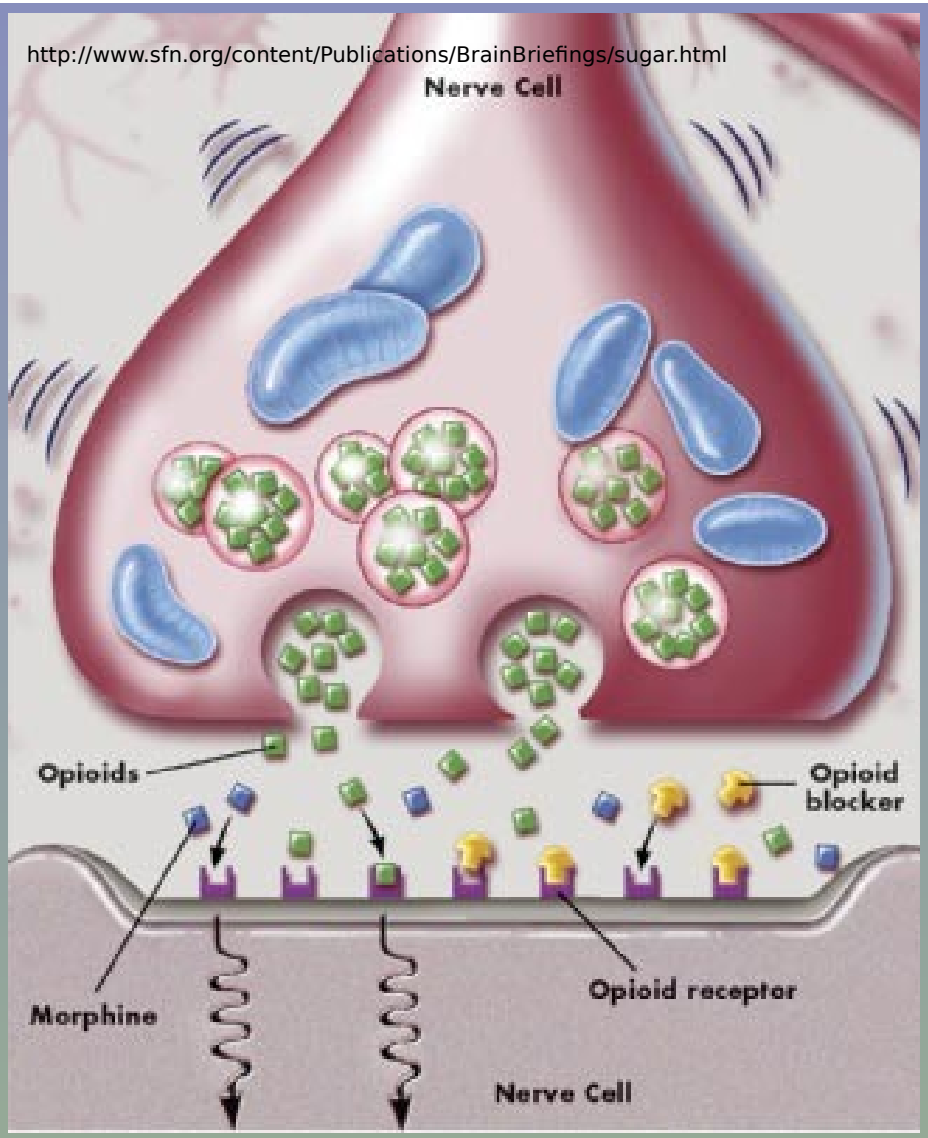
Some addictive drugs like heroin or morphine activate the opioid system.

This produces a pleasurable response that helps fuel a longing for more drugs and is key to the addiction process.

Effect of Heroin on the Brain

When morphine is ingested in the body, it acts on the brain by copying the chemical.

It causes us to feel good for longer periods than normal.



Effect of Heroin on the Brain

The brain has a timer and the morphine does not. The “feel good” effect will last until the drug wears off.

Continuous use of the drug will cause the brain to stop producing its natural chemical neurotransmitter.

Effect of Heroin on the Brain

When this happens, the user relies more on the ingested morphine to feel good.

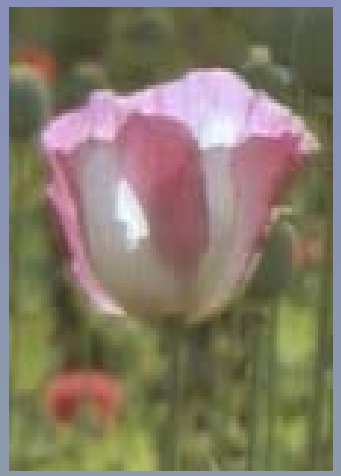
The drawback of course is addiction and serious medical consequences occur.

Credit: IRIN

Negative Consequences of Heroin

Heroin abuse the number one severe health risk and is associated with serious health conditions **Fatal overdose** **Spontaneous abortion** **Collapsed veins** **Infectious diseases (HIV/AIDS and hepatitis)**	**The short-term effects last for a few hours** **Feeling a surge of euphoria ("rush")** **Warm flushing of the skin** **A dry mouth,** **Heavy extremities.** **“On the nod," an alternately wakeful and drowsy state.** **Runny nose, abdominal cramps** **Diarrhea, craving** **Nausea, vomiting**
Long-term effects of heroin **Collapsed veins** **Infection of the heart lining and valves** **Abscesses** **Cellulites** **Liver disease.** **Pulmonary complications (depressing effects on respiration)**	**The Drug Abuse Warning Network* lists heroin/morphine among the three most frequently mentioned drugs reported in drug-related death cases in 2001.** **Nationwide, heroin emergency department mentions were statistically unchanged from 2001 to 2002, but have increased 35 percent since 1995.**

Opium Time Line



Opium as Folk Medicine (Up to 1600) – recreational drug in India.

Early European Opium Trade (1640-1773)-commercializing of opium to European countries

European Mercantilism (1773-1858)- British East India Company made Opium a household name.
First and Second Opium War fought.

High Imperial Opium Trade (1858-1907) – Opium became the drug of the masses. Abused in the cities of the West--Europe, the Americas, and Australia.

Opium Time Line

Multilateral Control (1907-1940) - Harrison Narcotics Act in 1914 was passed in America. League of Nations also adopted the measure. Sales in opium dropped.

War & Transition (1940-1947) – World War I and II, severely restricted the sales of opium.

Cold War Opium Expansion (1948-1972)- New opium route stretched from Turkey to Thailand.

Janis Joplin dead from a accidental overdose.

Opium Time Line

US Bilateral Suppression (1973-1979) –The Golden Crescent (Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan) becomes the new producers and trade route for opium.

Increase in Asian Zone (1979-1989) – Production is increased in Burma at an all time high.

John Belushi dies of a heroin-cocaine--"speedball" overdose.

Global Proliferation of Opium (1989-1994)-. Expansion of opium areas in Burma and Afghanistan, Central Asia and Latin America led to an increase in production.

River Phoenix dies of a heroin-cocaine "speedball" overdose.

Kurt Cobain, lead singer of Nirvana, dies of heroin-related suicide.

Opium Time Line

1995 –The Golden Triangle region of Southeast Asia leads in opium production, yielding 2,500 tons annually.

1996 – China, Nigeria, Colombia and Mexico are aggressively marketing heroin in the United States and Europe.

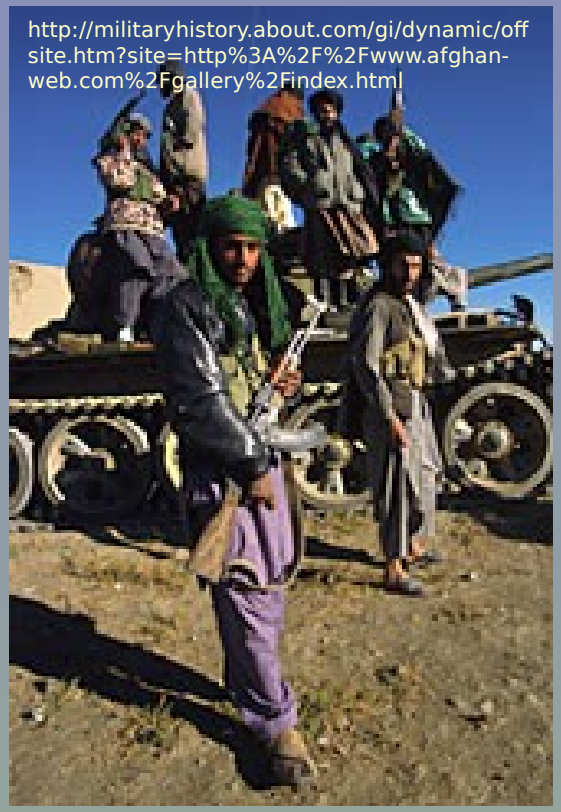
1999 – Afghanistan produces a bumper crop of 4,600 tons of opium.

Afghanistan Connection

In 2000, the Taliban regime enforced a ban on Afghanistan opium trade.

In 2001, the Afghan opium yield went from 80% to 10%.

After the demise of the Taliban, Afghan's opium trade successfully recovered.

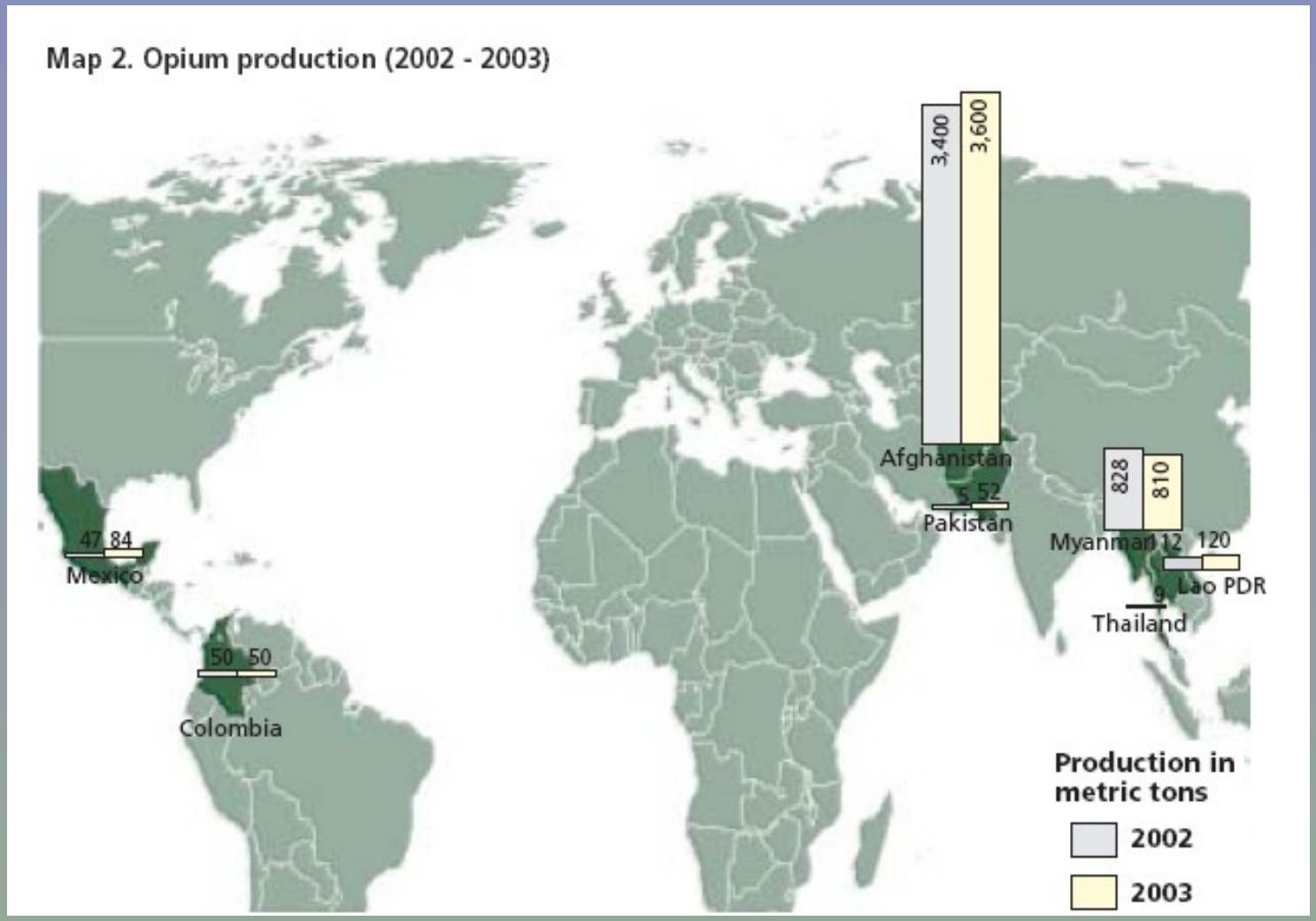


Afghanistan Connection

Afghanistan is estimated to currently be the world's largest producer of illicit opiates.

- 80% of Europe's heroin market
- 15% to 20% of North America.

Afghanistan Connection



Afghanistan Connection

The popularity of the opium trade can be contributed to the Afghan wars.

The economic disorder, political turmoil, and dire social conditions led many Afghan farmers to join in the opium trade.

Afghanistan tries to recover after 24 years of civil war.

Afghanistan Connection

The wars helped the facilitation of cross-border trafficking, which led to the growth of opium poppies.

Due to the increased demand for opium, the drug trade in Afghanistan expanded rapidly turning the country into the new world haven for opium.

Afghanistan Connection

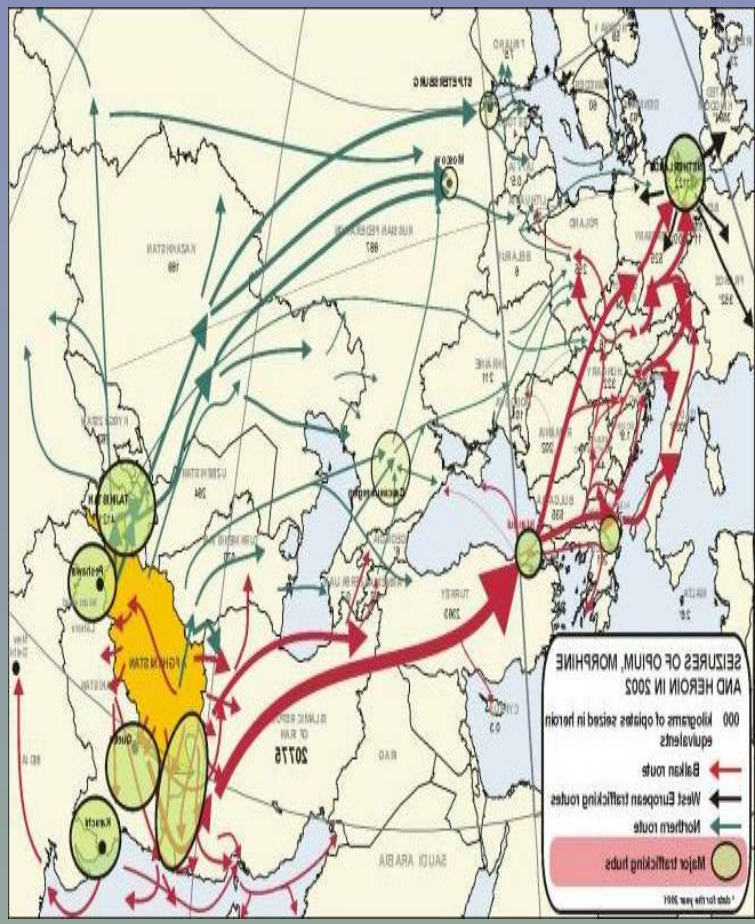
In addition, this environment attracted criminals, warlords, and political and religious extremists.

Networks were developed in Afghanistan between criminal organizations, drug traffickers and terrorist groups.

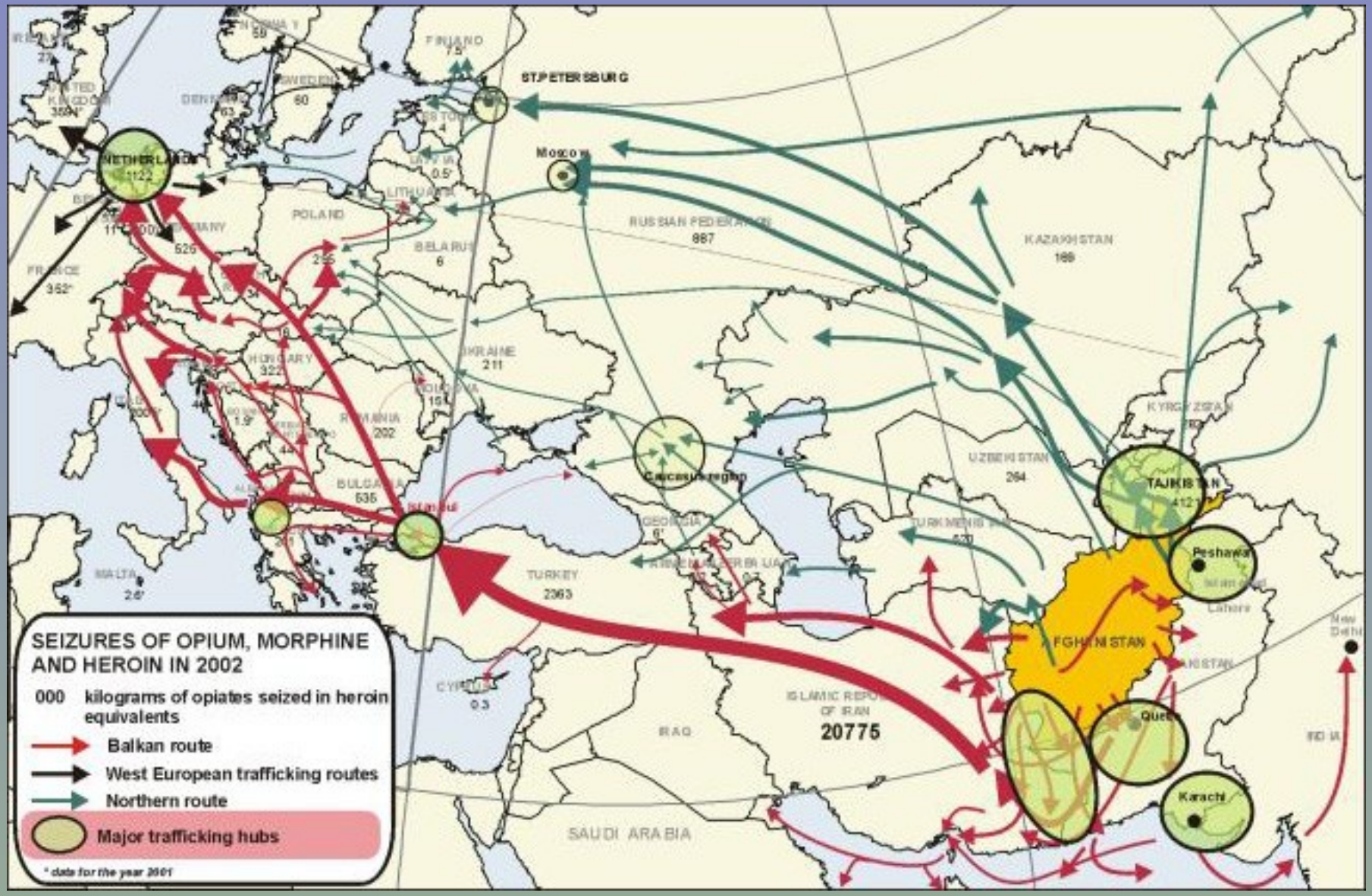
Afghanistan Connection

Criminal organizations, drug traffickers and terrorist groups ensured the drug routes to the international market. One dominant route is known as the “Balkan Route”.

Afghanistan farmers traded heroin to the Western market through Iran, Turkey, and the Balkan Peninsula.



Drug trafficking routes out of Afghanistan



Afghanistan Connection

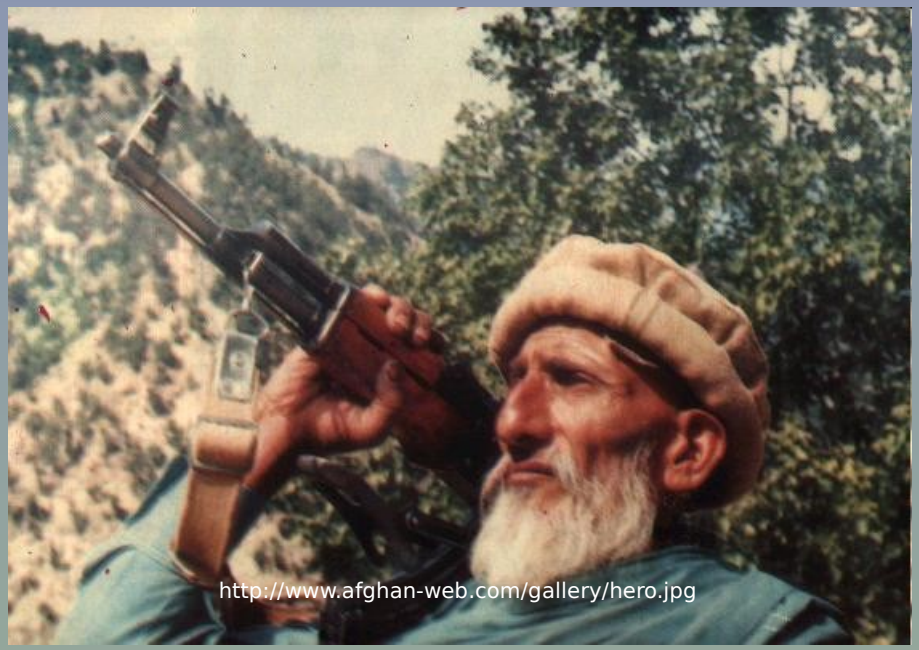
Drug Mafias

Buy raw opiates from farmers and sell shipments to international buyers.

Maintain community influence

Have established connection with local officials

Possess power locally.



Afghanistan Connection

Criminal Organizations (CO)

Transnational and international syndicates

Pose the single greatest threat to Afghan

Use of corruption and violence to exert its influence. Ex: bombings

Exerts power over drug trade and politics.

Afghanistan Connection

Insurgents/Terrorists

Known for their capacity to perpetuate violence and instability in the region.

Ex: Taliban, Al-Qaeda and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

IMU is stated to be the most crime-terror nexus of the three. It is more criminal than religious or political in nature.

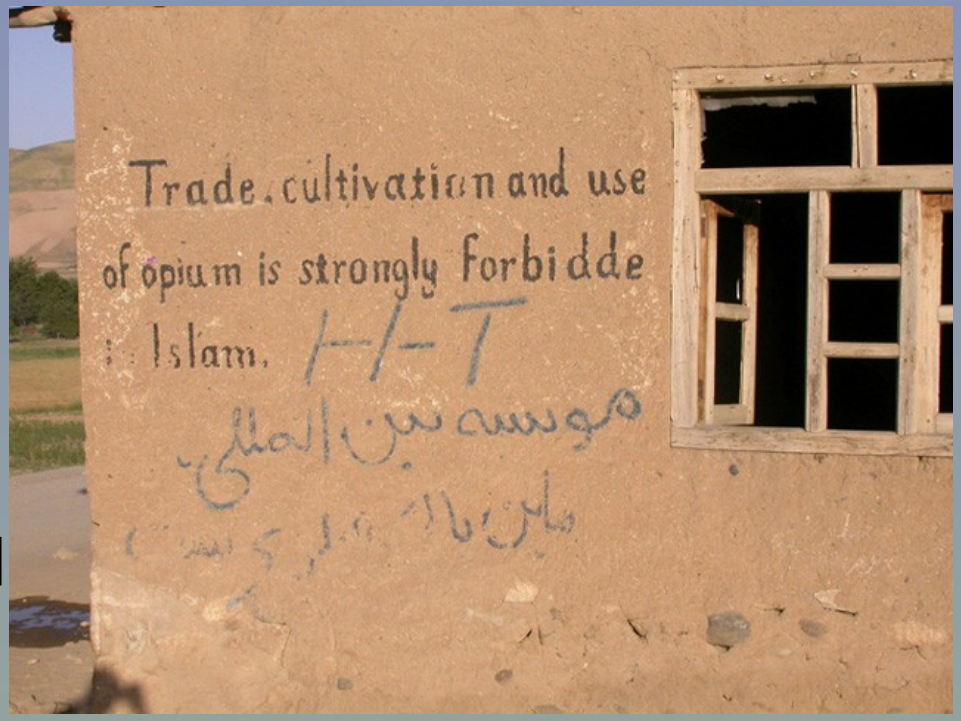
Afghanistan Connection

The opium economy is a threat to the national security of Afghan and could undermine the stability of the country.

Money from the opium trade sponsors criminal activities in the economy and the funding of terrorism.

Afghanistan Connection

To help stabilize itself, Afghanistan's newly adopted Constitution has declared opium production, cultivation, use, and trafficking illegal.



Impact of Opium Sale

Impact of Opium Sale- Regionally

Iran has 3.5 million drug addicts - the highest rate in the world, and a high percentage of these drug addicts are affected by HIV.

The addiction rate in Central Asia is about one percent and growing. This is dangerous in terms of public health.

Impact of Opium Sale- Regionally

In Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan up to 90 percent of addicts are HIV-positive, and 90 percent of new HIV cases [globally] are coming from that area.

Pakistan has a serious drugs problem.

HIV infection is a direct health consequence of the opium economy in Afghanistan.

Impact of Opium Sale - Internationally

Heroin consumption in Western Europe has declined significantly.

BUT is still problematic for the international community.

High levels of heroin addiction and drug-related crime on the streets.

Impact of Opium Sale - Internationally

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for Eastern Europe where consumption has increased enough to make up for the decline in Western Europe.

Attempt at Opium Reduction

Afghan attempt at Opium Reduction

President Hamid Karzai outlawed opium production.

Encouraged a 'holy war' against opium trade.

Counter Narcotics Measures

Governor-led Programs
Governor organizes eradication of a percentage of poppies.

The Counter-Narcotics Directorate (CND)
Support line ministries and governors in eradication.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
Implement annual opium surveys.

The Central Poppy Eradication Force
Physical eradication of poppies in selected areas.

Counter-Narcotics police
Conduct investigations and stop and search interdiction.

Specialized units
Covert squad of crack agents who eliminate processing laboratories, target known drug lords and trafficking vehicles.

http://opioids.com/images/opiumwar.html

Enforcement Measures

Vigorous enforcement action against drug traffickers

Development assistance to opium poppy growing areas in the framework of national development programs

Treatment and rehabilitation for drug users

Involve social organizations and individuals... in prevention and rehabilitation programs

Increase the role of public administration to promote and implement opium poppy eradication and law enforcement activities

http://www.aros.net/~lambo/afghan/afghan

US and UK Eradication Measures

United Kingdom - Opium Eradication Policy

Two strategies:

Compensation Approach (CA) - growers were offered payments to destroy their crops.

Negative Feedback:

- The CA was seen by farmers as an incentive to replant or increase cultivation for bigger payoff.
- Corrupt seizures of opium paste, non-payment of farmers and violent

Confiscated opium paste being destroyed

United Kingdom - Opium Eradication Policy

The Governor-led Approach (GA) – replaced the Compensatory Approach.
In the GA, the government pays governors to eradicate poppy in their jurisdiction.

Negative Feedback:

- Many governors were unreliable
- Many were implicated in the opium trade
- Eradication is slow and complex struggle.

United States - Opium Eradication Policy

Four strategies make up the US drug policy multi-million dollar investment.

- Forced eradication
- Support of law enforcement effectiveness
- Interdiction capacity
- ‘Alternative development' initiatives

United States - Opium Eradication Policy

Forced Eradication

Deny the Enemy Approach - stop the finance that poppy offers enemies of the US .

Negative Feedback:

- US policy on eradication is "fast and furious
- Eradication increased the animosity from farmers

Eradication of poppy fields

United States - Opium Eradication Policy

Alternative Development Initiatives

The alternative livelihood programs, included community development and crop substitution schemes.

Negative Feedback:

- Yielded poor results
- Not enough financial and economical help for farmers

United States - Opium Eradication Policy

The Deterrence Threshold (DT)

DT increased the fear of possible eradication of future crops.

Included in the Alternative Development Initiatives.

Negative Feedback:

- Deterrence threshold not reached.
- Low percentage of farmers fear eradication.

US/UK/Afghan Opium Policy

The US "fast and furious" approach and the UK governor-led eradication policy are resisted by farmers.

The average yield of wheat per hectare is US $222 for farmers vs. $12,700 for the equivalent in poppy culture.

Staggering difference in income challenges any efforts to eradicate the poppy fields.

Alternative cash crops to opium have little attraction for farmers in rural Afghanistan
Credit: IRIN/Chris Horwood

Summary

Definition of opium

Review historical facts about the opium.

List some of the negative ways opium affects the body and the brain.

State a minimum of two reasons why the opium trade is important to the people of Afghanistan.

Recognize at least two ways in which the sale of opium affects the whole International Community and what is being done to reduce its effect

Question #1

- Opium can be derived from all poppy plants?

- True
- False

- False – not all poppy plants produce opium, only the papaver somniferum poppy

Question #2

- Drug addiction becomes chronic, with relapses possible even after long periods of abstinence?

- True
- False

- True – even long periods of abstinence will not be bulletproof against the urges that one has to live with as an addict. Remember the saying, once an alcoholic always an alcoholic…this could be thought of in the same way.

Question #3

- You might become addicted to heroin after one use?

- True – Yes, one can become addicted to heroin after one use. What is it that causes some to become addicted and not others? We are not sure as of yet, but researchers are trying to find out the answers as to why Tom becomes addicted but Suzy does not.

Question #4

- The effect of heroin after one use can be felt in 1-2 minutes?

- True
- False

- False – The effects of heroin can be felt 7-8 seconds after it is ingested in the body.

Question #5

- The British Government fought two wars in China to win the right to sell opium to the Chinese people.

- True
- False

- True – The wars were probably fought over more things than opium, but the opium trade was a very powerful incentive.

Question #6

- Afghanistan provides around 15% of the world’s opium output?

- True
- False

- False – Afghanistan provides presently around 80% of the world’s opium output.

Question #7

- Two-thirds of all opiate takers use drugs of Afghan origins?

- True
- False

- True – Two thirds of the entire world’s opium has some Afghan origin.

Question #8

- The 2003 harvest is the second highest recorded in Afghanistan since surveying began in 1994?

- True
- False

- True – the highest was recorded in Afghanistan in 1999: 4,600 tons.

Question #9

- Heroin is a derivative of opium.

- True
- False

- False – Heroin is not a derivative of opium. It is a derivative of morphine.

Question #10

- Currently 80 percent of Afghanistan’s current economy is based upon opium production.

- True
- False

- False – 60% of Afghanistan’s economy is dependent on opium production.

References

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